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Mother's Day

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I COOK WITH WINE. SOMETIMES, I EUEN ADD IT TO THE FOOD. W.C. FIELDS

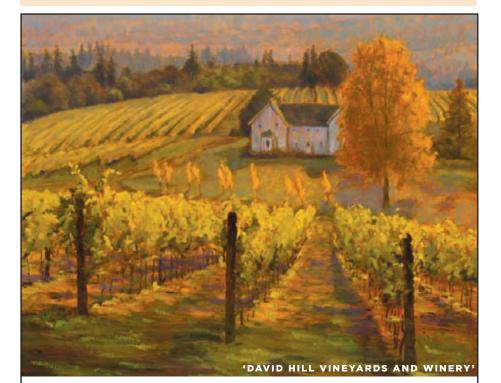




A Pressing Issue

The rains have ceased, the days are sunny and mild, and the nights are breezy and fresh. It's the perfect time to pop open a pinot warmed in the modest sun or a chilled rosé, grab a blanket and relax in the grass and watch the sun sink into the cool blue valley. Or throw on a light sweater, grab a friend and head for the hills of wine country, where patios and tastings await. Better yet, pour yourself your favorite vino, sit in your favorite chair and take notes on 2013's Uncorked. Because here in Oregon wine country, from indie vintners to women climbing the corporate vine, wine growlers to state microbes, the times they are a-changin'.

For information about May wine tastings and events visit southwillamettewines.com or willamettewines.com



En Vin A

Oregon artist takes pleine air painting to the vineyards by kevin piaskowski

iving as a landscape painter in a geographically diverse state such as Oregon is like being a kid in a candy store. Between the coast, mountains, deserts, the gorge, old-growth forests and the rolling hills of vineyards, the Beaver State is an artist's paradise. At least it is for Michael Orwick, a painter who specializes in landscapes and has made a career for himself capturing the beauty of Oregon's many natural wonders. But it was Orwick's vineyard project that established his painting career. "I live in Beaverton and my sister lives in McMinnville, and when I would go out to visit her I would basically drive past all of those vineyards," he says. "It just felt like mining for diamonds in your own backyard."

After graduating from Pacific Northwest College of Arts in Portland, Orwick started working as an animator, worked his way through illustration and eventually found his passion for landscapes with his first vineyard exhibit. "I did about 40 paintings, mostly of vineyards in the Yamhill and Dundee area," Orwick says. "I had a great time learning about the vines and getting to know all the different people involved and really exploring all the different vineyards."

Vintners took notice and started giving him tips on the best *pleine air* spots for different vineyards. But it was at his favorite vineyard, Youngberg Hill, where Orwick established his first "Painting the Vineyards" workshop and invited an intimate group of artists to spend a week honing their craft and tasting wine. "It's kind of how I wish I studied art instead of going to art school," Orwick says, comparing it to "the extreme sports of painting; it forces you to be out there and capture those moments no matter what." And like a pinot warmed by the sun, the Impressionistic moments Orwick captures are something to be savored: vineyards glowing at the golden hour, rows of grapevines in the moonlight, cultivated fields with the first blush of autumn.

'In a sense, I guess I retired really early," he says. His vineyard landscapes have sold well with the tourism that Oregon's wine industry enjoys. "I feel lucky not only to live here but to be able to capture it and share it with others," he says. Orwick is looking into conducting a "Painting the Vineyards" workshop in the Eugene area. \Leftrightarrow

For more information about Orwick's work, visit michaelorwick.com.

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Craft Vinting

Indie vintner Mark Nicholl brings artisanal flair to William Rose Wines

BY KAITLIN ANDERSON

ndie vintner Mark Nicholl started his own label for an elegantly simple reason: He wanted the freedom to make wines that he loved, whether that's a dry riesling or a Müller-Thurgau white. After spending 20 years producing wine in regions like Italy's Apuglia, France's Burgundy, Australia's Barossa and California's Sonoma, the Australian knows his craft. Until this spring, he served as head winemaker for Sweet Cheeks Winery while also independently producing his own small batches of artisanal wine under the label William Rose Wines for the past two years. Now it's his fulltime job

With his diverse experience and eclectic taste, I met up with Nicholl, curious as to what led the wily Australian to this small, damp corner of the earth. "Oregon and Northern Rhône — the parallels are amazing, underrated," he says. "I love syrah and pinot noir and I'm a riesling nut. So I get to make the wines I love and also what I sense that here in Oregon is what the region does best. It's not just the Willamette Valley pinots either." Nicholl points out that the Oregon wine industry is relatively young and producers are still testing out what varieties grow well here, leading to a greater capacity for innovation and experimentation in winemaking for the region.

When you're making wine for somebody else, you have to curb that risk taking," he says. With William Rose, Nicholl gets to "play around with different varieties or blends," which he gets from vineyards mostly in southern Oregon. He currently produces his vinos at J. Scott Cellars. He emphasizes that he strives to make wines that are expressive of the fruit they come from, are food-friendly and have good structure so they maintain longevity. "I like to make interesting wine," he says. "It doesn't have to be big and rich and doesn't have to punch you in the face. But it does have to stimulate the senses, whether on its own or

But the freedom of running your own label also comes with a lot of responsibility and risks. "It's a very expensive industry to be in ... my lifetime savings are in this brand," he says. Nicholl not only makes the wine, he works on the website, delivers his product and manages the bookkeeping, and then there's the networking. For such a small operation, he says, advertising isn't financially feasible and shelf space is hard to come by. "It's very much hand-selling because it's a crowded market," he says. "I've just released a couple of new wines and went around yesterday peddling my wares."

In the end, it's worth the risk for Nicholl. "I get to make the wines I actually want to drink!" he says. Right now that's a dry riesling, the perfect wine to sip on a spring eve. 🔅



MARK NICHOLL PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA





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Bottle Shock

Growlers may radically change Oregon's wine industry

n the golden years of my youth (ages 8-11), our family was transferred by the U.S. Navy to Rabat, Morocco. My mother blithely enrolled me in a French-run school. I made some friends. My closest bud was Pierrot; his dad was a sergeant in the French Air Force, his mother Bedouin. Pierrot periodically invited me to lunch at his house. Before lunch could be served (outside, under a shade tree, at a long table), his father grabbed a couple of empty wine bottles, handed them to Pierrot and me with instructions to return with vin ordinaire rouge (ordinary wine, red) and rose (rosé). We ran to our neighborhood grocery store and self-importantly (lunch couldn't begin without the wines) handed over our bottles. The owner blandly turned to the kegs, filled our jugs, took our money, somehow closed the containers and sent us dashing home. No questions about our ages, no issues about whether we intended to get drunk. This was routine, the mature development of a country (France — Morocco was then still *French* Morocco) where wine had a cultural history two millennia old. When we reached Pierrot's, lunch was launched; and the kids were served wine (half water) with the grub. A nap soon ensued, very civilized.

Could such an event occur in some Oregon kid's future? Maybe. This year, HB 2443, requested by the Oregon Winegrowers Association, sailed virtually unopposed through the House, co-sponsored by Reps. Paul Holvey and Jim Thompson, then through the Senate, guided by Lee Beyer (D-Springfield), then was signed, April 11, by

Gov. Kitz, and immediately went into effect. Now dubbed the "wine growler bill," the law allows changes that could alter deeply our behavior with wine.

For those who might have missed the first blip of the trend, the term "growler," usually applied to beer, is a customer-supplied container that can be filled by licensed retailers from kegs bearing the consumer's favorite brew. The customer gets a price break. Retailers and brewers move a lot of juice. With the passage of HB 2443, the growler can contain wine (limit: 2 gals.).

Now what? The change is still so new that retailers, wineries and others are scrambling to adapt. For just one example, Randy Stokes, manager of Eugene's Sundance Wines, the largest wine shop in Oregon, is already looking at appropriate equipment: "My ideal would be to have six taps" on kegs dispensing whatever wines the suppliers have on offer. Very likely, these would not be the premium wines that still do best in bottles, but good, ordinary, everyday wines. However, some of Oregon's best producers — Cameron, Brooks, King Estate — are already putting very drinkable wines into kegs, especially for restaurants' bythe-glass pours.

One guy very enthused about the new law is Jeff Philpot, owner-operator of Velox Wine Works, a wine distributor specializing in kegs. Philpot calls the new law a "great idea," and some of his enthusiasm arises from his environmental research, showing that "50-70 percent of a winery's carbon footprint is glass." Reducing the amount of glass can result in long-term benefits, especially locally.

Philpot points out that in Lane County, "only about 20 percent of glass is recycled." And Lane County tries harder than most.

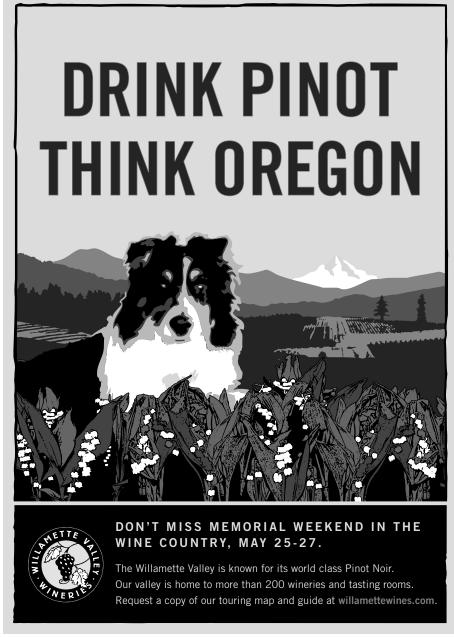
Mark Nicholl, the talented winemaker formerly at Sweet Cheeks, now concentrating on his own label, the William Rose wines, says, "I'm still on the fence about this," but concedes the change could work as a "definite advantage" in terms of bringing wine into people's everyday lives.

Mike Coplin is as beer-wise as anyone in Eugene; he's also owner of 16 Tons. His take on the wine growler prospect is simple: "It's just like beer." His stores have contributed mightily to the growler business, in part through retailing the growler bottles themselves (a 64 ounce and a 32 ounce), and filling the growlers has been "a huge part of our business." He notes, "We've had wine on tap at our café for over a year." The most impactful outcome: "The playing field has been leveled for people who don't have deep pockets." Coplin insists on two conditions for growlers (beer or wine): "Any bottle that's cleanable and sealable can be a growler. You can't send someone out of your store with an open container." He's also looking at machines that sterilize bottles before they're filled from kegs.

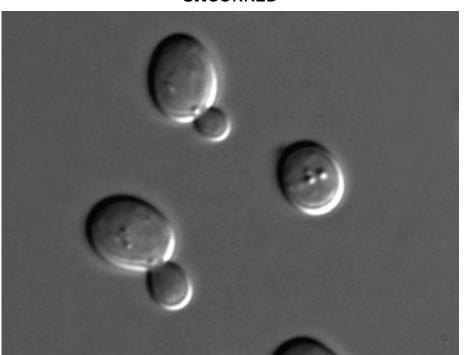
Oregon is still recovering from the devastating effects of Prohibition (1916-30), which nearly eradicated our early history of grape-growing and winemaking. In fact, our entire relationship with all alcohol-containing and alcohol-using products lingers in a kind of infancy. Now that we have more than 450 wineries producing \$2 billion in revenue annually, can we begin to grow up and learn to accept ordinary wines (and beers and ciders) as part of our everyday dining?

We'll soon find out. I know that someday soon I'd like to send my grandson to the local little store, toting a couple of vacant growlers, doing the essential work of garnering our lunch *vins*. He'd dig it. And nobody can run like that boy. :

Note: I had help on this article from my daughter, Paloma Sparks, an attorney and policy advisor to Senator Lee Beyer.







Mulling the Microbe

Saccharomyces cerevisiae, a wine yeast, may become the first state microbe in Oregon

BY AMY SCHNEIDER

ay hello to a winemaker's little friend. For thousands of years, yeast has graced us with its ability to turn grape juice into wine. Wine lovers owe a debt of gratitude to one species in particular, known to professionals as *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Variations of this species are used in brewing beer and in winemaking, reason enough to show some love for these helpful microbes.

Oregon might be the first state to demonstrate its appreciation for the little guys. On April 11, the Oregon House voted unanimously to pass House Concurrent Resolution 12, which designates *S. cerevisiae*, or brewer's yeast, as Oregon's official state microbe. If it passes the Senate, Oregon will be the first state to have an official microbe. It's a big feat for a small species that helps bring billions of dollars to Oregon's economy from the wine industry alone.

Although the relationship between winemakers and yeast spans more than 7,000 years, scientists didn't know how yeast worked until around 150 years ago, when Louis Pasteur realized the role of yeast in alcohol production. As it turns out, winemaking started as a happy accident.

"The domestication of yeast was an unknown process to the ancient winemakers," says Alan Bakalinsky, an associate professor in Food Science and Technology at Oregon State University. "They didn't know yeast was required for making wine, but they knew that when these grapes were harvested and broken open, this transformation would occur."

Since then, we've learned that yeast cells live on the surface of grapes, and when the cells are exposed to the sugary grape juice inside, they begin to feed off the sugar, excreting alcohol and carbon dioxide into the juice in a process called fermentation. Bakalinsky says that some modern wineries still rely on the natural microbial diversity present in their vineyards, while others buy yeast from commercial manufacturers.

Winemakers rely heavily on *S. cerevisiae* in particular, partly because it can outlast the other kinds of yeast present during the fermentation process. With its high tolerance for alcohol and sulfites in the wine, it lives on while the other species of yeast die from the high alcohol exposure. Early winemakers unwittingly domesticated *S. cerevisiae* by using it over and over again, encouraged by repeated success.

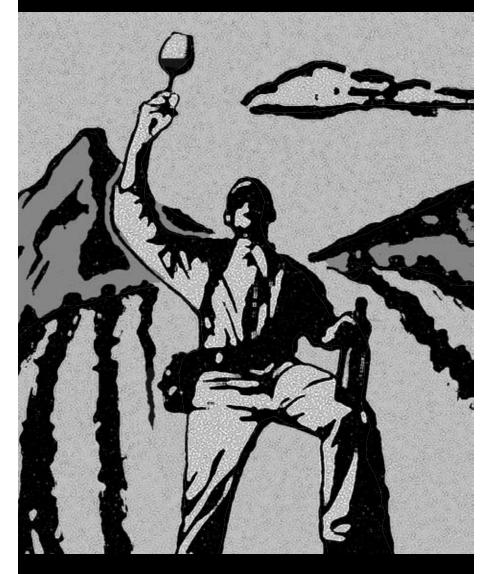
"We've selected strains that don't produce a lot of stinky flavors and aromas," Bakalinsky says. "Over time, winemakers have stuck with the yeasts that produce wonderful wines."

And *S. cerevisiae* also produces great research — it was the first fungus to have its genome sequenced, and it is used as a model organism to study aging and genetics.

Bakalinsky says his "love affair" with *S. cerevisiae* began in the mid-'80s, and he is delighted to see the species getting a mention in the Oregon House. "I think it's wonderful, especially in recognition of the outstanding wines we're making here in Oregon and the growing excitement of the brewing community as well," Bakalinsky says.

So next time you sip a glass of wine, make sure to toast the microbe that made it all possible. \Leftrightarrow

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SWEET CHEEKS MANAGER KACY MINNIS HAS BEEN WITH THE WINERY SINCE 2006 PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

More so than in beer or spirits, women are rising in the wine industry by WILLIAM KENNEDY

he Oregon wine industry is a driving economic force, particularly in Lane County. Statewide, the wine business employed approximately 14,000 people in 2010: everyone from winery managers to vintners, from servers in tasting rooms to those tending the vineyards. And as the Oregon wine industry expands, it's following a nationwide trend — employing more and more women in an industry once dominated by men.

"Nearly every winery in this area has a woman in a leading role," says Kacy Minnis, manager at Sweet Cheeks Winery, explaining that 90 percent of the resumes she receives are from women. Minnis came to the business through a love of gardening, a background in food service and simply a preference for the beverage. "As I learned more about it, the attraction also became about the lifestyle," Minnis says.

"For places like Sweet Cheeks Winery, you have the vineyard right outside the cellar door," Minnis continues, "so there is an agricultural aspect of the industry. There is the tasting room aspect of meeting so many different kinds of people. There is the winemaking side that is a science and an art all in one. The last part is the combination of food and wine — whether that is attending a wine dinner, being invited to another winery to see their wines or just taking home the flavor of the day to enjoy with dinner, friends and loved ones."

Minnis thinks there are a variety of reasons why women are finding success in the world of wineries. "I think one of the smartest things a winery could do is have women involved,"

she says, continuing that since more women buy wine, wine is frequently marketed to them and a woman's insight into the product is invaluable. "Also, it is a romantic industry that still involves sales. I feel like women really have a knack for balancing romance and beauty with getting the job done."

Amanda Cihlar is a graduate of UC Davis' prestigious master's degree program in

viticulture. Like Minnis, Cihlar loves gardening, "I knew I loved being outside but also really enjoyed science and horticulture. Viticulture fit the bill," Cihlar says. "Also, our family loves to cook and enjoy wine with meals, so I saw the power of bringing people together that wine can lend itself to."

In July, Cihlar will be moving to Eugene from California's Napa Valley to become Sweet Cheeks' Vineyard Manager. Cihlar stresses what's most important about the rise of women in the wine industry is that they are finding ways to be successful in the world of science.

"For any science field, it is important for more women to join and be competitive," Cihlar says. "I think parents should bring their daughters outside and ask them to help with

gardening or mowing the lawn and encourage them to play Cheeks Winery manager in the dirt. Exposure at a young age to math and science and nature will promote the likelihood of a young lady choosing science and math over another subject matter." "I think that the opportunity for more education in the viticulture and enology side of

things can lend itself to women feeling more confident to enter roles such as winemaker or vineyard manager, which seem to be primarily male roles," Minnis says. 🔆

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'Nearly every winery in

this area has a woman

in a leading role.

— Kacy Minnis, Sweet

Vintage Vineyard

Old School brings new ethos to pinot

BY RACHAEL CARNES

ld School Vineyard's 21 acres are tended by one full-time human employee, grower Stephen Hagen, and a crew of four-legged colleagues, including a team of Belgian draft horses, Ike and Olivia, who help Hagen cultivate under vine rows, till the soil and drill cover crops with precision and accuracy. Dotting the vineyard are

a flock of Katahdin-dorper and babydoll Southdown sheep, which Hagen credits as the center of his farming philosophy: "Grow a wonderful, diverse cover crop — a mix of native plants and forage — and the sheep's job is to make sure we never have to buy fertilizer off the farm." Two stalwart akbash dogs, Mike and Eva, protect the sheep from mountain lions and coyotes. A Turkish breed, the akbash lineage as protectors of livestock goes back thousands of years. "And during lambing season," Hagen adds, "Eva is an excellent midwife to the laboring ewes."

"We're trying to do something here that not a lot of people are doing," says Hagen. "We're not just organic, we're not just biodynamic, we're old school."

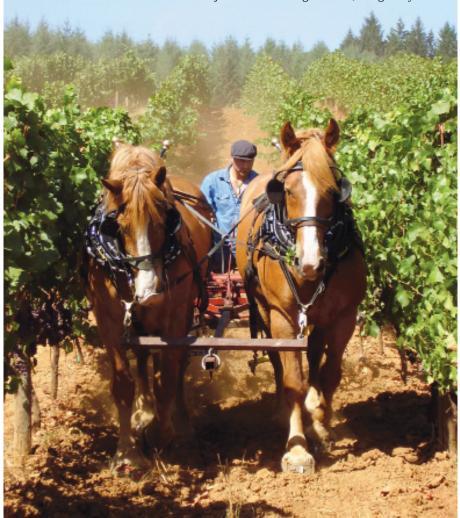
The vineyard's location west of Junction City, just a stone's throw from where Hagen grew up, compelled him to grow pinot. "It's the most exciting varietal of grape if you're interested in growing in a site-specific way," he says. "Pinot is genetically unstable. It has a tendency to mutate and adapt to the characteristics of where it's grown. If you're interested in well-rounded farming, focusing on the needs of the site, then pinot will give you the most rewards for those efforts."

With a microclimate that carries the heat of the day and an elevation that promotes cooling at night, where vines tap deep into soil that's at once volcanic and oceanic, Old School's site and methods are producing a new range of flavors. "Old School fruit — even as it gets dizzyingly ripe — holds its acids well," Hagen says. The result is a wine that's well balanced between big, deep, dark fruit and vibrant, mouth-watering acidity punctuating a fine-grained tannin structure. "The floral aromas, the odd spice and earth flavors are rarely seen," says Drew Voit, Hagen's winemaker. "The site is doing something unique, something exotic, and we're just trying to capture it."

Old School designates are available through Rex Hill, King Estate, Harper Voit and Trathen Hall. A significant portion of their fruit can also be enjoyed in Antica Terra, as well as Broadley's reserves. And this year, Old School launched its first bottle: a 2009, available through their website (oldschoolvineyards.com). Beacon Hill Winery in Gaston pours Old School, and folks can look for it in local wine shops and on restaurant menus soon.

Hagen invites anyone interested in tasting or learning more about the artistry of "old school" farming techniques to contact him, and come to the farm to see not just how this pinot's grown, but how *he* grows it.

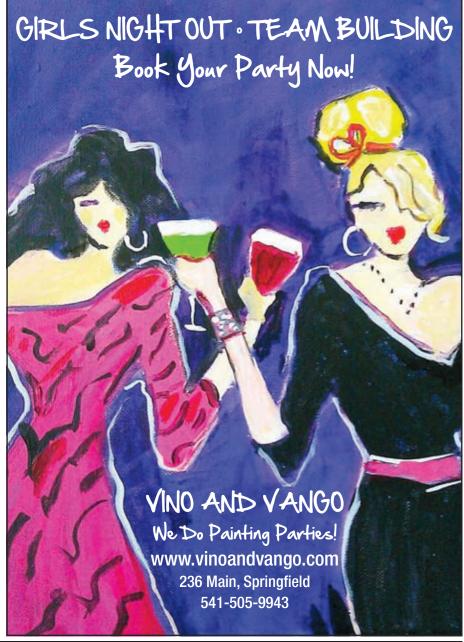
"I don't want to make a lot of wine. I just want to make great wine," Hagen says. 🕸



OLD SCHOOL GROWER STEPHEN HAGEN WITH BELGIAN DRAFT HORSES

















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